

Writing a Good Lay Summary

Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust research applications are reviewed by our Research Advisory Panel (RAP) which includes expert parent members to ensure that we consider the patient perspective of those affected by childhood cancer. As a result, several members may have little scientific knowledge but a lot of personal experience. It is vital to think about your lay readers and read this guidance in full before completing the lay summary section of our application form.

The lay members of our RAP may only read the lay summary to make their assessment about the research, so this section really is essential. We suggest that it is a good idea to ask someone without a scientific background to read your lay summary before submitting the application to us.

What should I include?

- Brief background/context
- The aims of the study
- How you will go about doing the research (strategy)
- The information the research will provide (impact) and how it will be disseminated.

In particular, our panel will be looking at:

- How relevant the research is to children affected with cancer.
- The potential impact that the research may have on children with cancer.
- How long it could be until the work could make a difference to children with cancer (i.e. the timescale).
- The quality and clarity of the application and how well the research is communicated.
- Whether the researcher has taken the needs of children with cancer into account.
- The extent of the involvement of children with cancer and their carers in the preparation of the application and the management of the study.
- Basic science applications must clearly demonstrate how your research relates to childhood cancer and how it could provide valuable insights for future research and/or translation into clinical practice.

What should a good lay summary avoid?

- Detailed explanations of what childhood cancer is – lay readers are likely to know a lot about this and will want to know more about the particular research project.
- Unnecessary jargon, abbreviations and technical terms wherever possible. If you have to use these terms, then provide alongside a clear explanation.
- Wordy sentences. Try to keep sentences short and simple. Sentences of less than 25 words can be a good guide.
- Writing the whole scientific story. The lay summary is meant to be a short summary. Ask yourself, “What are the ‘take-home messages?’”
- Using the scientific abstract with a few word changes. The lay summary is not the same as the scientific abstract, so it is preferable to write them separately.

Helpful resources

- INVOLVE ‘[Make it Clear](#)’ campaign – Guidance on how to ensure each research study has a clear and concise summary.
- [Plain English campaign](#) – Guidance on how to avoid jargon when communicating your research.
- [Readability calculator](#) - Computer-calculated index which can tell you roughly what level of education someone will need to be able to read a piece of text easily.
- [Access to Understanding](#) - Guidance is for anyone who is planning to write about biomedical or health research for a non-specialist audience.